

The Ames Intelligencer

Issue 1 of 4 ■ Ames Heritage Association Newsletter ■ Mar. 2000

■ The Ames Intelligencer was the first newspaper in the city of Ames ■

From Necessity To Nuisance: The Railroad in Ames

by Peggy Baer, from the exhibition at The Story Center

"The Iron Horse was the obsession of early Iowa. Every crossroads was convinced it would blossom to greatness and prosperity as soon as the track-builders appeared on the horizon. Every town already established was sure it would wither and die if the railroad veered right or left and took off in some other direction.

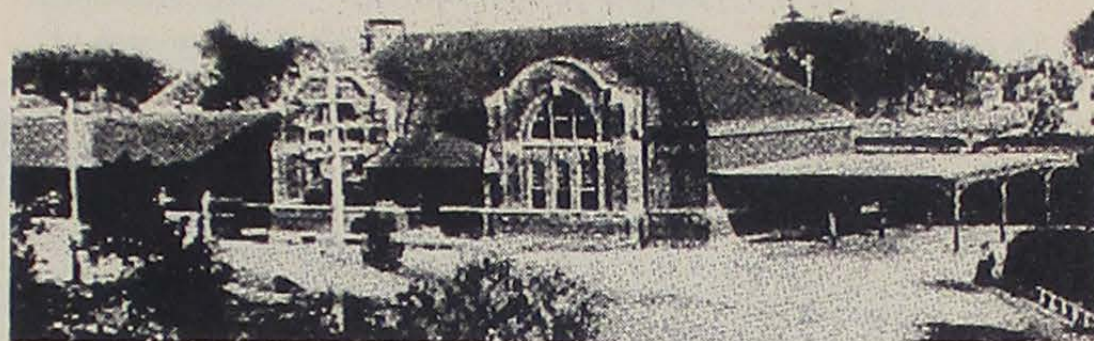
Farmers were certain that a railroad connection to eastern markets would lift them up from a hand-to-mouth existence and transform them into gentlemen of means.

Travelers yearned to be liberated from jerking stage-coaches, from muddy roads and from steamboats stranded for days, weeks or entire seasons by floods, droughts and frozen rivers. Think of it – flying across the prairie at 25 miles per hour!"

"A Savior on Rails for Iowa" – DM Register 6/23/96

The coming of the railroad was the reason for the founding of Ames in 1864. The railroad has always been physically in the middle of Ames. For one hundred years, the railroad was important in many ways to the citizens of Ames and Story County.

- The railroad was the primary, and sometimes only, source of transportation for citizens to come and go from Ames
- The railroad was an important source of employment – almost everyone knew someone who worked for the railroad
- For the hundred years before the rise in the use of trucks, most companies depended upon the railroad to bring their freight
- Entertainment and excitement were provided by the activities that took place on the railroad
- The railroad stations were the "front doors" of Ames for people coming and going to the rest of the world



The 1900 Ames Depot.

Now, after 135 years of the railroad in Ames, many people regard the railroad presence as a nuisance. The railroad yard in downtown Ames was moved out of town in the mid-1960's to make way for additional downtown parking. The promised elimination of slow railroads that caused crossing congestion was the main platform of an Ames mayor in the late 1970's. Since the mid 1990's the noise of the locomotive horn blowing has been a major irritant to people living near the tracks. There have been many injuries and fatalities on the tracks in the downtown area. Now there is discussion about building more separation structures or moving the railroad out of town.

Railroads are still the significant and cost effective means to move bulk commodities and heavy goods across the country, but many Ames citizens see the trains only as a nuisance.

Few people have any connection to the railroad anymore. The number of railroad employees has been reduced. The number of employees who live in Ames and work on trains that pass through Ames is small. There are no passenger trains through Ames. Only a few businesses get rail freight delivered – wheat to Barilla, plastic pellets to Ball Plastics, or coal to the power plant. Many trains move quickly through town carrying "who-knows-what" to "who-knows-where".

What will the future bring to Ames and its relationship with the railroad? Will the conversations over train whistles and other issues spur a new appreciation and interest in the iron horse? Perhaps a new chapter in history can be written.

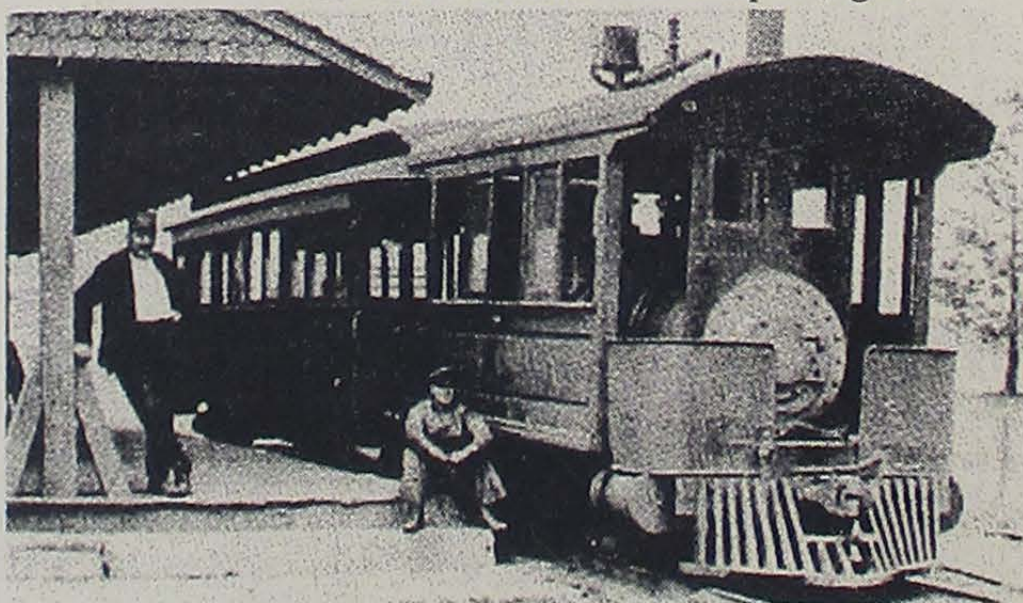
Railroad Timeline

- 1846 Iowa became a State
- 1853 Story County named and Nevada designated county seat
- 1858 Iowa Agricultural College (IAC) established by Legislature
- 1860 Farmhouse built on IAC campus
- 1864 In November Alexander and Cynthia Duff sold land to John Blair for Cedar Rapids & Missouri River Railroad right-of-way, and a town. Original town platted December 17.
- 1865 First Ames depot built on south side of tracks and west side of Duff. In June, first scheduled passenger train through Ames. The Cedar Rapids & Missouri River Railroad became the Chicago & North Western Railroad in December.
- 1866 Population of Ames = 100
- 1869 On May 10, transcontinental railroad completed at Promontory, Utah. Ames was on the first transcontinental rail system.



- 1874 The narrow gauge Des Moines & Minnesota Railroad (above) built from Des Moines to Ames. As the Des Moines & Minneapolis Railroad, it was extended as far as Callanan (now Jewell). The line was acquired by CNW in 1884.

- 1875 Population of Ames = 820
- 1890 Ames population = 1276; college enrollment was 297. Ames Street Railway Company, known as the Ames & College Railway, the "Dinkey" was incorporated September 20.
- 1891 On July 4 the Dinkey (below) made the first run between Ames and campus (right).



- 1900 Ames population = 2422; college enrollment was 940. CNW built new depot in Ames. CNW converted to a two-track system.
- 1907 Ames & College Railroad sold to Ft. Dodge, Des Moines & Southern Railroad. The line was built from Kelly to Ames and the interurban made its first run down Onondaga (Main) St. in July.

1909

Ames reports highest passenger train ticket sales in Iowa. Newton & Northwestern Railroad was sold and merged with Ft. Dodge, Des Moines & Southern. The lines connected at Midvale south of Ames. On July 3 the ISC and Ames celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the decision to locate the college in Story County. Special trains came from Nevada and Boone and Kate Shelley was a special guest. Attendance was 20,000. Population 4223; college enrollment 1723. Theodore Roosevelt spoke from the top steps of the Ames Depot on September 1 to 5000 people.

1910

1911

On August 3 the *Ames Intelligencer* reported there were 42 passenger trains per day through Ames; 26 east-west; 16 north-south. There were also 8 interurban trains to Des Moines/day, eight arriving from Des Moines. Streetcars carried an average of 133 passengers per hour between campus and downtown.

1913

1916

Streetcar opened loop route around ISC campus.

1918

City proposed an overhead bridge over Carroll Avenue, one of a number of locations that the railroad never agreed to.

1920

1923

Population 6270; college enrollment 4475.

A train bearing the body of President Warren Harding passed through Ames at 7 A.M. on August 6. 6000 people gathered at the depot to pay homage to the deceased President.



1929

Ft. Dodge, DM & Southern petitioned State Commerce Commission for permission to cease operating street cars.

1930

1935

Population 10,261; college enrollment 5795.

Voters approved the transfer of \$25,000 from the electric light fund for construction of the Grand Avenue underpass. Vote: 2312 YES and 2005 NO.

1938

Ben Cole and Sons built the Grand Avenue underpass.

1940

1960

Population 10,555; college enrollment 7909.

The last passenger train through Ames was on March 12. Population was 27,003.

1965

In September and October the CNW purchased 20 acres east of Ames to move their switching yards.

1967

City acquired final title to land of off-street parking from CNW in July.

1970

1971

Population was 39,505

City purchased the CNW depot for conversion to city offices. Clark Avenue crossing opened.

1980

1990

1995

Population 45,775

Population 47,198

In March the Union Pacific purchased the Chicago & North Western Railroad.

1998

An average of 60 freight trains/day pass through Ames. Automated horns erected at three city crossings to reduce noise nuisance.

The InterUrban

In the early part of this century, Iowa had an important Coal producing region. The need to move this coal provided the incentive to build railroads. Incorporated on February 16, 1906, the Fort Dodge, Des Moines & Southern Railway grew to become the longest interurban in Iowa. Its 85-mile long main-line from Des Moines to Fort Dodge linked the coal and agricultural regions of western Iowa. Many branches increased the total route miles of electrified railroad to 147.

Interurbans were electric railways often built with local financing and managed by local people. The interurban lines became well known due to their longevity. Built to steam railroad standards, they could participate in interchange freight service. Freight revenues sustained passenger services as well as the railways themselves.

In Ames, The FDDM&S acquired the Ames & College Railway on May 1, 1906. It suspended service in Ames during electrification and constructed a line between Ames and the FDDM&S main line at Kelley. The first interurban car (below) arrived on June 29, 1907.

In 1912 20-minute service replaced the original 30-minute service. Service improvements continued in 1916 when a new loop around the campus was opened, and 15-minute service was started in 1917. A new passenger station at a cost of \$20,000 was built on Grand Avenue in 1916. However, by 1921 unregulated and competitive bus service caused a drop in revenues. Prohibition of bus operation on streets served by streetcars helped for a time. A fare increase from 5 cents to 7 cents was granted in May 1925.

During the entire time that the interurban served the ISC campus, there were consistent citizen concerns: lack of adequate capacity on cars; lack of safety measures such as fenders; growing number of accidents and injuries; lack of adequate engine power; poor financial management of the railroad; and lack of control over the railroad operation by the Ames City Council. The interurban was saddled by rigid paths throughout the city and could not keep up with the continual expansion of Ames. Buses and automobiles replaced the interurban service in Ames.

In July 1929, FDDM&S received permission to discontinue service during the summer and never resumed operation. The street car tracks were removed from Ames in August 1930. Passenger service from Ames to Des Moines and Ft. Dodge via the FDDM&S continued for many years before the depot was torn down in 1965 and the tracks removed in 1966.



News News News News

■ Hoggatt Workday Announced

The workday at Hoggatt School will be Saturday, April 1st at 9:30am. Carole Jensen, Chair of the school committee, intends to clean the school and shed in preparation for open hours this spring and summer. Carole plans to expand open hours to both Saturdays and Sundays.

To pitch in on the work day, or to become a trained school host volunteer, call Carole at 233-2431.

■ Bauge Log Home Work Days

Depending upon the weather, work days at the Bauge Log Home will be Saturday, April 29 or Saturday, May 6. Rollie Struss will direct work activities for the work day, and may also schedule an additional session. To lend a helping hand, contact Rollie at 232-0865. It is Rollie's intention to complete the log home restoration this year.

The first Open House is scheduled in conjunction with McFarland Park's Partners Spring Festival, Sunday, May 7th, 2-5pm.

■ AHA Launches Member Drive

The Board has set an ambitious goal of doubling its membership this year to support an expanded schedule of activities. The week of February 28, over 400 history-minded individuals and businesses were personally invited by letter to join our efforts, an invitation to join was printed on the editorial page and clip-and-send coupons were published for a week in The Tribune.

As of this writing, a number of responses have been received and we hope more are on the way. Members may assist us in identifying persons who would be interested in helping our efforts by becoming members. Call Willie Struss at 232-0865, or e-mail her at willie@ames.net.

■ Story Center New Exhibits

Three new exhibits are on view through May 10 at The Story Center, 417 Douglas.

- Eat, Drink & Be Modern: Food & Beverages in Ames
- Safe & Soft: The History of Water Treatment in Ames
- Next To Godliness: Keeping & Cleaning House in Ames

■ State Society Seeks Local Books

The State Historical Society seeks any and all books and publications written on local history subjects, including church histories, centennial celebrations by businesses and other organizations, and more. Call David Hudson at 515-281-5111 or e-mail david-hudson@uiowa.edu.

■ Upcoming Programs

Mark your calendars for these programs:

- March 25, 2pm, at The Story Center

Bottle collector, Don Faas, will talk about early bottling businesses in Ames.

- April 8, 11am – 3pm, Bus Tour of Lincoln Highway Historical Sites

Limited to 20 people, call Priscilla Matt to reserve your seat now – 232-7688. Cost \$15, includes lunch at the soon-to-be restored Niland's Café in Colo. Meet at 11am at the west Memorial Union entrance.

■ Annual Meeting Set for April 30

The Ames Heritage Association Annual Meeting is set for April 30, 3pm at the Ames Public Library Auditorium. Farwell Brown will recount his grandfather's early Iowa train experiences in a talk entitled "A Traveling Man's Railroad Stories – 1873 – 1914".

A short business agenda and annual progress report will be presented. The talk is open to the public.

Ames Heritage Association Board: President. Kathy Svec; Secretary. Willie Struss; Treasurer: Bill LaGrange; Rollic Struss, Peggy Baer, Carole Jensen, Jean Jonas, Mark Hamin, Suann Evans, Nick Howell. The Board meets monthly.

Ames Heritage Association is a legally incorporated, not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting interest in state and local history through the operation of three historic sites as well as publications, programs and exhibitions.

The Intelligencer is named after an early Ames newspaper and is a newsletter published three times a year for Association members. Direct comments or questions to the Editor, PO Box 821, Ames, Iowa 50010.

Grant Allows Hiring Curator & Administrator

Ames Heritage Association received a grant from the Iowa Community Cultural Grant Program for the 2000 fiscal year to fund a part-time museum administrator and collections curator. AHA membership dollars provide the dollar-per-dollar match required to win the grant.

Our administrator, Dr. Mark Hamin, received his PhD in 1999 from University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, in history of science and technology. He brings professional training and a perceptive vision of the Association goals for museum development. Dr. Hamin teaches as an adjunct at Iowa State in Community and Regional Planning. He researched and developed the current three exhibitions at The Story Center.

Jean Jonas is an Iowa State graduate with coursework in museum studies and a special interest in collections management. She has begun the organization and cataloguing of AHA's small artifact collection, and will oversee any future additions to the collection. AHA has developed a collections policy to guide her efforts.

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Ames Intelligencer
Ames Heritage Association
PO Box 821
Ames, Iowa 50010

We Sincerely Thank Our '00 Renewing Members & Welcome New Members!

Received as of 3/27/00

Support up to \$25

Elmer Aurand
Jean Bates
Elaine Bath
Don Beitz
Ruth Boast
Arlan Branhagan
Ralph Brugger
Glen Buseman
Stewart Burger
Janice Burkhardt
Donna Carr
Donna Cipolloni
Roger Coulson
Irene Crippen
Keith Dickson
W.E. Dreeszen
Carol Elbert
Christine Freeman
Lucy Futrell
Ruth Grabau
Virjama Hamilton
Tom Hannum
Herb Hatch
Meridee Hegstrom
Isabel Hendrickson
Joyce & Tom Hertz
Fay Hill
Herb Howell
Nick Howell
ISU Women's Club-
Heritage Div.
Annette Jensen
Julianne Jorstad
Helen Koch
Nancy Osborn Johnson
Marlys Ladd
Leonard Larsen
Wilma Lesan
R.E. Lewis
Bill LaGrange
Jere Maddux
Ruth Matson
Priscilla Matt
Eleanor McKee
Marion McKeown
Jim & Char Menzel

Larry Middleton
J.W. Nilsson
Garnette Nordyke
Deloris Prior
Darryl Rensink
David Richter
Katy Seidel
Wes Shank
Willis Skrdla
Avis Steensland
Al Stempel
Marna Stevens
Target Stores
Irene Swanson
Joanne Tedesco
Mary Terpstra
Evelyn Thielen
Connie Vaclav
Margaret Vance
Roy Dale Voorhees
Ruth Walker
Tom Walsh
Dennis Wendell
Mark Widriechnier

Support up to \$40

Kay & Roger Beckett
Don Charles
William & Suzan
Dreyer
Lu & Bob Dyas
Reiny & Maureen
Friedrich
David & Hanna
Gradwohl
Ken & Bev Kruempel
Betty & Stan Ring
Dorothy & Gerald
Seilert
John & Suzan
Shierholtz
Story County Auditor
Story County
Conservation Board
Vernon & Sybil Stone
Marv & Jan Walter

Support up to \$75

John F. & Barbara
Adams
George Daniels
Loya Getz
Olive Harrison
Questers Chapter Dane
207
Robert Shearer
J.P. Severson
Harry & Edna Svec

Support up to \$100

Bruce & Nancy Adams
Terry Adams
Peggy & Roger Baer
Pat Bannit
Bob Bourne
Joyce & Rodney Brink
Bob & Anne Buck
Burt Drexler
Don Faas
Olive Harrison
Jean Hempstead
Bruce Kellogg
Joann Peterson
James Pritchard &
Diane Debinski
Herman Quirnbach &
Leigh Tesfatsion
Martha & Jorgen
Rasmussen
Rollie & Willie Struss
Kathy Svec
Sharon & Don Wirth
Don Zytowski

Support up to \$200

Harold & Carole Jensen

*If you have a question on your
membership status, please call
Willie Struss at 232-0865.*

■ Need To Renew?

Can't remember if you
have renewed for 2000?

Check the mailing label
on this newsletter. If
the date reads "2000"
you are up-to-date as of
March 27, 2000.
If it doesn't, please
ensure continuation of
our activities by
renewing today!

Won't You Ask A Friend To Join?

Ames Heritage
Association, Hoggatt
School, Bauge Log
Home and The Story
Center are all member
supported.

Do you know a history-
minded person you
could invite to actively
support our local history
efforts by becoming a
member?

Regular	\$25
Family	\$40
Friend	\$50
Sustaining	\$100
Benefactor	\$500
Patron	\$1,000

Name _____

Address _____

Send to:

PO Box 821, Ames, IA
50010